



Setting Healthy Boundaries

Protecting Yourself Whilst
Supporting Someone Affected by
Gambling Harm



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Protecting Yourself Whilst Supporting Someone Affected by Gambling Harm

When someone you care about is experiencing gambling harm, it is natural to want to help.

Many affected others find themselves providing emotional support, helping with finances, solving problems, managing crises, or trying to prevent further harm. These actions often come from a place of love, care, and concern.

However, without clear boundaries, affected others can become overwhelmed, exhausted, financially vulnerable, and emotionally drained.

At Recover with Pride, we often remind people that supporting someone does not mean sacrificing your own wellbeing.

Healthy boundaries can protect both you and the person you care about.



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What Are Boundaries?

Boundaries are the limits we set to protect our wellbeing, safety, finances, relationships, and emotional health.

Boundaries help us answer questions such as:

- What am I comfortable with?
- What am I willing to do?
- What am I not willing to do?
- What do I need to feel safe and respected?

Boundaries are not about controlling somebody else's behaviour.

They are about identifying what you need and communicating that clearly.

Why Boundaries Matter

When gambling harm is present, affected others can sometimes find themselves carrying responsibilities that do not belong to them.

You may:

- Constantly monitor someone else's behaviour.
- Take responsibility for solving financial problems.
- Cover debts repeatedly.
- Put your own needs second.
- Ignore the impact on your own wellbeing.
- Feel responsible for someone else's recovery.

Over time, this can lead to:

- Stress and anxiety.
- Emotional exhaustion.
- Financial difficulties.
- Relationship tension.
- Resentment.
- Burnout.

Healthy boundaries help prevent this.

Boundaries Are Not Punishments

Many people worry that setting boundaries is selfish or uncaring.

Some affected others tell us:

- "I feel guilty saying no."
- "I should be doing more."
- "I don't want them to think I've given up on them."
- "I don't want to make things worse."

It is important to remember:

Boundaries are not punishments.

They are not about abandoning someone.

They are about creating healthier and safer ways of supporting both yourself and the other person.

Understanding What You Can and Cannot Control

One of the biggest challenges for affected others is recognising the difference between what they can control and what they cannot.

Things You Cannot Control

- Whether someone gambles.
- Whether someone seeks support.
- Whether someone tells the truth.
- Whether someone follows through on promises.
- Whether someone recovers.

Things You Can Control

- Your own decisions.
- Your own finances.
- Your own wellbeing.
- Your own responses.
- What support you offer.
- What behaviour you are willing to accept.

Focusing on what you can control can reduce feelings of frustration and help you feel more empowered.

Financial Boundaries

Financial boundaries are often one of the most important forms of protection.

Examples might include:

- Not lending money.
- Not paying gambling-related debts.
- Keeping separate bank accounts.
- Protecting personal savings.
- Agreeing clear financial expectations.
- Monitoring shared household expenses.

Each situation will be different.

What matters is finding boundaries that feel appropriate and sustainable for you.

Emotional Boundaries

Affected others often carry a huge emotional burden.

You may feel responsible for keeping someone motivated, managing their emotions, or preventing setbacks.

Emotional boundaries may include:

- Recognising that another person's feelings are not your responsibility.
- Taking breaks when conversations become overwhelming.
- Protecting time for yourself.
- Not being available 24 hours a day.
- Seeking support for your own wellbeing.

You can care deeply about someone without becoming responsible for their emotional state.

Boundaries Around Honesty

Trust is often affected by gambling harm.

For some people, rebuilding trust requires clear expectations around honesty and transparency.

Examples may include:

- Open conversations about finances.
- Discussing concerns honestly.
- Being transparent about debts.
- Sharing information relevant to household finances.

Remember that trust is rebuilt through consistent actions over time.

You are allowed to take the time you need.

Living Together and Shared Responsibilities

If you live with someone experiencing gambling harm, boundaries may be particularly important.

You might need conversations around:

- Household bills.
- Rent or mortgage payments.
- Shared finances.
- Borrowing money.
- Access to financial information.
- Expectations within the home.

Clear communication can help reduce misunderstandings and provide greater stability for everyone involved.

What If Someone Disagrees With Your Boundaries?

Not everyone will welcome boundaries.

Some people may:

- Become upset.
- Argue.
- Accuse you of being unsupportive.
- Try to negotiate limits you have set.

This can be difficult, particularly if you care about the person deeply.

However, someone else's reaction does not automatically mean your boundary is wrong.

Healthy boundaries are often uncomfortable at first, especially if patterns within a relationship have existed for a long time.

Setting Boundaries Without Guilt

Many affected others feel guilty about prioritising their own needs.

You may feel:

- Responsible for fixing things.
- Worried about letting someone down.
- Afraid of appearing selfish.

Try reframing boundaries as acts of self-respect rather than rejection.

For example:

Instead of:

"I am abandoning them."

Consider:

"I am protecting my wellbeing whilst continuing to care about them."

Instead of:

"I'm being selfish."

Consider:

"I am recognising my own needs and limits."

When Gambling Harm and Crime Intersect

If gambling has resulted in theft, fraud, financial abuse, or criminal justice involvement, boundaries may become even more important.

You may need to consider:

- Protecting your finances.
- Safeguarding vulnerable family members.
- Seeking legal advice.
- Limiting access to money.
- Establishing clear expectations for future contact.

It is possible to care about someone whilst also taking steps to protect yourself.

Your safety and wellbeing should never be compromised.

LGBTQ+ Relationships and Boundaries

Within LGBTQ+ communities, support networks can sometimes be smaller or more interconnected.

People may rely heavily on:

- Chosen family.
- Friendship groups.
- Community spaces.
- Shared social networks.

This can sometimes make boundary-setting feel particularly difficult.

You may worry about:

- Damaging important relationships.
- Losing community connections.
- Being judged by others.

However, healthy boundaries remain important regardless of the type of relationship involved.

Whether someone is a partner, friend, chosen family member, ex-partner, or community connection, your wellbeing matters.

Examples of Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries will look different for everyone, but examples may include:

- "I will support you to find help, but I cannot stop you from gambling."
- "I am not able to lend money."
- "I need honesty about our shared finances."
- "I am willing to talk, but not if the conversation becomes abusive."
- "I need time to focus on my own wellbeing."
- "I will not cover gambling-related debts."

The most effective boundaries are usually:

- Clear.
- Realistic.
- Consistent.
- Communicated respectfully.

Remember: Boundaries Can Change

Boundaries are not fixed forever.

They may change as situations evolve.

For example:

- During periods of crisis, you may need stronger boundaries.
- As trust rebuilds, boundaries may look different.
- Following recovery, some boundaries may no longer be needed.

The important thing is that boundaries continue to reflect your needs, safety, and wellbeing.

How Recover with Pride Can Help

At Recover with Pride, we understand that setting boundaries can feel challenging, particularly when someone you love is struggling.

We can help affected others:

- Understand why boundaries matter.
- Explore healthy ways to communicate boundaries.
- Build confidence in protecting their wellbeing.
- Manage feelings of guilt.
- Develop practical strategies for difficult situations.
- Access additional support and resources.

Boundaries are not about withdrawing support.

They are about creating healthier relationships and protecting your wellbeing.

Key Takeaway

Supporting someone affected by gambling harm does not mean taking responsibility for their choices, finances, or recovery.

Healthy boundaries help protect your emotional wellbeing, financial security, relationships, and sense of self.

You can care about someone, support someone, and still have limits.

In fact, healthy boundaries are often one of the most important tools available to affected others.

Key Message

Boundaries are not barriers to support. They are a way of protecting your wellbeing whilst maintaining compassion, care, and respect for both yourself and the person affected by gambling harm.

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Aila

Aila is a website for women in Scotland experiencing or affected by gambling harm, developed by women with lived and living experience. If you are being harmed by someone else's gambling, Aila brings together emotional support, financial and debt advice, and practical guidance on navigating conversations and setting boundaries, helping you find the right service at the right time. Our monthly Living Room offers a welcoming in-person and online space for women affected by their own or someone else's gambling, and the Lived and Living Library shares stories from women across Scotland. You are not alone.

Links

Website

aila-scotland.co.uk/explore-available-support/support-for-affected-others/

aila-scotland.co.uk/explore-available-support/are-you-supporting-someone-else/

aila-scotland.co.uk

Contact

hello@aila-scotland.co.uk



Ara

Ara provides free support for people across the South West affected by someone else's gambling, including partners, family members, friends and colleagues. Support includes one-to-one counselling delivered face-to-face, by telephone or online by professionally accredited, CBT-qualified counsellors. Sessions focus on emotional wellbeing, coping strategies, recovery and rebuilding confidence.

Ara also offers specialist relationship counselling support, where gambling has impacted trust, communication, finances or family life, helping people to rebuild relationships and move forward together. In addition, our easy access workshops provide practical advice, digital safety support, understanding gambling-related harms, and action planning for those seeking support at the earliest opportunity.

Links

Website

www.recovery4all.co.uk/

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Betknowmore UK

Behind every person experiencing gambling harm, an estimated 6-10 other people may be affected.

A partner losing sleep. A parent caught between worry and responsibility. A young person living with tension in their home. A friend who wants to help but doesn't know how. A colleague covering up mistakes at work.

If this is you, Betknowmore UK is right behind you.

We offer digital peer support service for anyone aged 18 and above. Our Peer Supporters have City and Guilds assured training and lived experience of gambling harms. They understand what you are going through.

Supporting you through shared lived experience

As part of the statutory levy, Betknowmore UK is funded to provide 1:1 and group support to affected others in England and Scotland.

This support aims to ensure that through peer-led engagement and intervention, people are offered the most appropriate support to address their specific needs.

Links

Website

www.betknowmoreuk.org/affected-other

Breakeven

Breakeven

Breakeven offers counselling support for partners, family members and friends affected by someone else's gambling. Gambling harm can put pressure on relationships, finances and the wider household, and support is available for you too.

You can receive support even if the person who gambles is not ready to seek help. Breakeven works with affected family members and friends to help them understand their experiences and find ways to cope with the impact.

Its family and friends resources also offer guidance on looking after yourself, understanding gambling harms and having supportive, non-judgemental conversations.

Links

Website

www.breakeven.org.uk/family-and-friends

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Chances

As part of Cyrenians' homelessness prevention strategy – Chances offers person-centred, non-judgemental, and non-time limited support to anyone aged 16+ in Scotland who is impacted by gambling harm. For affected others - the service adopts a Community Reinforcement & Family Training approach focused on their recovery and not the person gambling and supports with:

- Promoting self-care, general wellbeing, independence, and boundary setting
- Understanding gambling behaviour and a loved one's triggers
- Improving communication with the person gambling through positive reinforcement techniques
- Guidance & tools to encourage the person gambling to reduce the harms experienced

Online and phone options are offered Scotland wide and in-person in Edinburgh, the Lothians and Falkirk. Organisational and self-referrals are welcome via email or phone on **07983 137239**. Alternatively, a referral form can be completed (available upon request).

Links

Website

[Chances: Gambling Support](#)

Contact

[07983 137239](tel:07983137239)

chances@cyrenians.scot



Gambling Recovery Therapy

Founded by Lorraine Perrons and Claire Jones, Gambling Recovery for All CIC and Gambling Recovery Therapy Limited combine family experience of gambling harm with specialist professional training.

The CIC's Rebuild & Rise: Reclaim Your Life is a fully funded, trauma-informed 12-week online programme for eligible women across the UK affected by someone else's gambling. It focuses on emotional wellbeing, financial resilience, boundaries, confidence and rebuilding a sense of choice and control. Women can seek support whether or not the person who gambles has stopped or sought help.

Gambling Recovery Therapy Limited also offers private paid one-to-one therapy for people experiencing gambling harm and those affected by someone else's gambling, with a complimentary 30-minute introductory conversation.

Links

Website

www.gamblingrecoverytherapy.com/affected-other

forms.gle/aMA4fJbgDMSpg0Tb9

www.gamblingrecoverytherapy.com/brochure

Contact

contact@gamblingrecoverytherapy.com

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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Support for Affected Others



Recover Together

Recover Together provides a safe and supportive space for people affected by gambling harm, including family members, partners, friends and others impacted by someone else's gambling. Reaching out can feel difficult, and people may not always know what support they need or where to start. We're here to listen and walk alongside them, helping them find a way forward that feels right for them. Our approach is shaped by lived experience of gambling harm and recovery, and we meet people with empathy, honesty and no judgement, providing support, understanding and connection.

Links

Website

recovertogether.org/what-we-do/affected-others/



Shiltons' Silverlining

Shiltons' Silverlining supports partners, family members, friends and loved ones affected by someone else's gambling. Its Affected Others service offers a confidential space to talk, be heard and feel understood.

The charity recognises that someone else's gambling can bring anxiety, financial pressure, relationship difficulties and isolation. It offers emotional support, guidance and information to help people cope with the impact and find a way forward.

Built on lived experience, the service recognises that affected family members and friends need support for their own mental health, wellbeing and relationships too.

Links

Website

shiltonssilverlining.org/affected-others/

Refer for support here:

www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/referral/



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